

**Town of Ashburnham
Policy Statement**

POLICY NAME:	Social Media	POLICY NUMBER:	008
APPROVAL AUTHORITY:	BOS/TA	APPLIES TO:	Town Officials
ADOPTED:	2/1/2017	REVISED:	08/07/2017
		REVIEWED:	--

1.0 Policy Statement

The Town of Ashburnham endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Town's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

2.0 Reason for the Policy

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the Town and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem solving and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The Town also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some Town personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on Town personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Town personnel.

3.0 Scope of Policy

This policy shall cover social media use for all Town Officials relative to Town-related postings, personal postings during Town time, and personal use on personal time.

4.0 Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all Town Officials.

5.0 Who is responsible for enforcing this policy?

The Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator are responsible for enforcing this policy.

6.0 Definitions

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."

Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrative rights.

Post: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

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Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to: social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace); microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle); photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube); wikis (Wikipedia); blogs; and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

Social Networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

Speech: Expressions or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken works, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, video tape, or related forms of communication.

Town Personnel: shall mean all employees and volunteers, whether appointed or elected, to an official Town role.

Web 2.0: The second generation of World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

7.0 Policy

7.1 Town Social Media Use

- A. Determine Strategy.** Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the Town's presence on the website. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the Town's official website.
- B. Procedures**
 - i. All Town social media sites shall be approved by the Town Administrator or his/her designee.
 - ii. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Town and shall have Town contact information prominently displayed.
 - iii. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - iv. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - v. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
 - vi. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Town.
 - vii. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Town reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
 - viii. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

7.2 Town – Sanctioned Use

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A. Town personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:

- i. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Town and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
- ii. Identify themselves as an official of the Town.
- iii. Not conduct political or private activities.
- iv. The use of Town computers by Town personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization from the Town Administrator or his/her designee.
- v. Town personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the Town's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without the permission of the Town Administrator.
- vi. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

B. Potential Uses

- i. Social Media is a valuable communicative tool for information about:
 - Press Releases;
 - Town Meetings;
 - Town Happenings;
 - Job openings;
 - Volunteer/Committee Openings
 - Town Hall Closings
 - Elections; and
 - Other Town Information.
- ii. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:
 - Road closures;
 - Special events;
 - Weather emergencies; and
 - Missing or endangered persons.

7.3 Personal Use

A. Precautions

- i. Barring state law or binding employment contracts to the contrary, Town personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.
- ii. Town personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of the Town for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among co-workers, or negatively affect the public perception of the Town.

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- iii. As public employees, Town personnel are cautioned that speech on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties – that is, that owes its existence to the employee’s professional duties and responsibilities – is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form a basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Town.
 - iv. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without permission from the Town Administrator or his/her designee.
 - v. For safety and security reasons, Town personnel are cautioned to limit information regarding their employment and not disclose information of fellow employees without their permission.
 - vi. Town personnel shall not display Town logos, uniforms or any part of the uniform or Town equipment or vehicles without the permission of the Town Administrator or his/her designee.
 - vii. When using social media, Town personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the Town’s code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media.
- B. Prohibitions.** In particular, Town personnel are prohibited from the following:
- i. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
 - ii. Speech involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
 - iii. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an employee’s veracity. Town personnel thus sanctioned are subject to discipline up to and including termination.
 - iv. Town personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority, make any statements, speeches, appearances and endorsements, or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or position of the Town without the approval of the Town Administrator or his/her designee.
- C. Litigation.** Town personnel should be aware that they may be subject to litigation for:
- i. Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);
 - ii. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person.
 - iii. Using someone else’s name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person’s permission for an exploitative purpose; or

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- iv. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
- v. Town personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Town at any time without notice.

D. Reporting violations – any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or any website or web page in violation of the provisions of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

8.0 Attachments

NONE

